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Carter Picks Frank Press of MIT as His Science Adviser

The long-rumored but slow-coming selection of Frank Press to be President Carter's science adviser has evoked a bit of surprise but neither disappointment nor enthusiasm in Washington science-policy circles. Those who know Press regard him highly — "sensible" is the word that often comes up in response to questions about him. But though he has logged a good deal of time on the correct Washington committees, he has not left any emphatic impression in the Capital.

(The appointment, though certain as anything can be certain in this capital, has not yet been officially announced).

Press, 52, is chairman of MIT's Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences, and gained his scientific reputation in seismology, winning election to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) at the relatively tender age of 34.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, he was a central figure on the technical side of negotiations that led to the partial nuclear test ban, and later played a major role in establishing the seismic net that monitors underground nuclear tests. He served from 1961-1964 on the now-defunct President's Science Advisory Committee, traditionally a grooming station for future presidential science advisers. And last year, he completed a six-year term on the National Science Board, the policymaking body of the National Science Foundation. He is a member of the Council of the National Academy of Sciences and for the past two and a half years has chaired the Committee on Scholarly Exchanges with the People's Republic of China, an Academy-based consortium of learned societies that administers exchanges with the PRC.

In recent times, Press has had some involvement with national science-policy issues through membership on a subcommittee of the Academy Council that advises the NAS President on that subject; on the Science Board, he emerged as a strong spokesman for support of basic research, and his PRC committee duties have coincided with his interest in earthquake prediction and Chinese experience in that field. Absent from his long list of credits, it should be noted, was any direct involvement with the Carter campaign, though at the request of Lewis Branscomb, the IBM executive who served as coordinator of Carter's Science and Technology Policy Task Force, Press prepared a background paper on earthquake research, with particular reference to California's seismic problems.

Thus, Press's background is similar to those of many of his predecessors' in the White House advisory post — national security affairs, diversified advisory service in Washington, an academic homebase, and a solid record in science and technology.

But in searching for the genesis of the appointment, the principal clues are rather narrow, and they are Defense Secretary Brown, seismology, and Carter's commitment to a total test ban.

The search committee that recommended Press to Carter consisted of physicist Brown, at whose swearing-in ceremony, January 23, the President said: "I asked Harold to give me some recommendations for science adviser, by the way, and he gave me five recommendations. He [Brown] is going to be my physics adviser and I'm going to get someone else to

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Breeder Reactor Cut in Budget Revision—See Page 3

In Brief

Well into its second month in office, the Carter Administration continues to proceed slowly in filling the government's second-tier positions. Since that's where the top research-administration jobs are located, many R&D agencies are either without chiefs or headed by holdovers whose fates have not been revealed.

As required by law, the National Science Board has given the President a list of candidates for the directorship of the National Science Foundation, with an especially strong recommendation for Acting Director Richard Atkinson, who's held the job on that basis since last September. There has been no reply, but now that the White House science job has been filled, action on the NSF post and others may be speeded up.

A lot of the delay is attributed to a vast logjam of paper in the office of Carter aide Hamilton Jordan. Staff people in executive agencies say that papers are swallowed up there and sometimes are not heard of again for weeks. For example, two weeks after Frank Press was informed that Mr. Carter wants him as science adviser, the official announcement of the appointment had still not been made.

"IBM Connection" Apparently Scuttled Branscomb's Chances

The main element of surprise in Frank Press's appointment as presidential science adviser is that shortly before and after the election, it was widely assumed that the job would go to Lewis Branscomb, chief scientist of IBM.

Branscomb, who formerly headed the National Bureau of Standards, served during the campaign as "coordinator" of Carter's Science and Technology Policy Task Force (SGR Vol. VI, No. 14), an amorphous group, of undisclosed numbers and duties, that supplied Carter's Atlanta headquarters with background papers and assorted materials.

Branscomb never said he was interested in the job and never made a move to get it, but his campaign role and his presence on various government advisory bodies created the impression that he retained a touch of Potomac fever from his Washington days.

However, after the campaign was over, Branscomb had no further contact with the Carter camp, though it was often stated in print, here and elsewhere, that he was the leading candidate for the White House science job. Strengthening that impression was the fact that Branscomb embodies a mix of government and industrial experience in research and development at a time when issues of industrial innovation and high-technology relationships with other countries rank high in current Washington worries. Press has a sterling scientific background, and he knows his way around Washington, but he's always been an academic scientist.

By the time the new Administration got around to the group of appointments that include science adviser, Carter was the object of a journalistic potshot that, curiously, may have affected whatever interest the President had in Branscomb. *New York Times* columnist William Safire, a former Nixon speechwriter who has made his mark by defending the disgraced ex-President as no worse than his predecessors or his successors, wrote a column cataloging the IBM linkages of a number of high-level Carter appointments. There are lots of them, including ex-employees, directors, and regional legal counsel. Safire caustically suggested that IBM was taking over the government, though he omitted any explanation of why Carter was assisting this strange coup.

Since the column appeared, however, appointees with IBM backgrounds have been scarce.

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help me in the other position."

Rumor has placed so many names on that undisclosed list that it is not unlikely that Carter was indulging in the game of flattering many while the paperwork was being completed on the one he wants; that's happened with many other recently filled positions.

In any case, Press was the only candidate to receive serious consideration. He met with the President on February 9, and came away with an assignment to write a memo stating his idea of the role he would play in the Administration. The following week he was informed that he had the job, and the White House almost immediately began consulting him on research-related appointments in various agencies and departments, as well as other matters.

As presidential science adviser, Press will also be director of the newly established Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), successor to the science office that Nixon abolished in 1973. The legislation that created OSTP calls for it to play a central role in the formulation of national science policy and also makes the director an adviser to the National Security Council (NSC). The latter item was a sensitive issue in the past, since the Defense Department resented the intrusion of White House-based civilian scientists into its go-for-broke weapons schemes.

When Nixon abolished the office, he assigned some of the residue to the Office of the Director of the National Science Foundation; not included was the military role. The restoration of that role was made essentially optional by designating the OSTP director as an NSC adviser, since advisers cannot thrust themselves upon those who do not wish to be advised. However, the working plan for the Carter White House calls for the OSTP director to take part in national security affairs. Clearly, that's Brown's preference, but just how it will work out in actual practice is by no means certain. The NSC has its own scientific and technical specialists, and after the cordiality of the startup period has passed, they may not be keen for an outsider poking into their domain.

An irony of the Secretary of Defense handpicking the President's science adviser is that the White House science office was first established, in 1958, because of Eisenhower's desire to have an analytical counterweight to the Defense Department. For that purpose, he brought in civilian scientists who were supposed to be free of the military-industrial complex that he later lamented in his valedictory.

The inbred nature of the Brown-Press relationship

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Energy Revision Favors Short-Term Research

The budget revisions which President Carter sent to Congress on February 22 would redirect spending on energy research and development away from some long-term efforts and toward programs likely to produce relatively short-term results. Otherwise, the Carter Administration has left intact virtually all the proposals for research and development contained in Mr. Ford's lame-duck budget (SGR Vol. VII, No. 2).

The revisions were hurriedly put together during the first three weeks of the new Administration, and there was time to deal only with those areas of the budget which were featured in Carter's election promises or which rank high in his Administration's political priorities. Since most research and development programs fall into neither of those categories, and since there was no science adviser in the White House to have any input into the budget revisions, the research and development proposals were mostly untouched.

The proposed changes in energy research and development priorities provide a foretaste of the comprehensive energy policy which Carter has promised to unveil by mid-April. There are few major surprises, though it is clear that the Carter Administration is prepared to play a more aggressive role than its predecessor in pushing energy conservation and in providing federal support for commercializing technologies such as solar heating and electric automobile propulsion.

All three long-term efforts — the breeder reactor program, research on nuclear fusion and the development of large solar generating plants — would be scaled down under Carter's proposals, and the savings would be reprogrammed into less exotic projects.

The most important change from the Ford proposals is that the Carter Administration has suggested that funding for the liquid-metal fast-breeder reactor (LMFBR) program should be reduced to below its present level, and that the entire effort should be reviewed. A statement distributed by the Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA), which is said to have been drafted by James Schlesinger, Carter's energy adviser, notes that the new Administration's priorities for short-term technologies "suggest that past plans for expansion of the LMFBR program may no longer be viable."

Consequently, the Carter budget revisions would strip nearly $200 million from the Ford Administration's spending proposals for the LMFBR program in fiscal year 1978, reducing the effort to $655 million, some $30 million below its present level. The largest cut would be applied to the demonstration breeder reactor, construction of which was to have begun later this year near Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Construction will be delayed, pending the outcome of the Administration's review of the entire LMFBR program.

As for solar power, no overall changes in funding have been proposed, though there is a significant change in direction. In short, Carter has suggested that the budget for construction of a pilot-scale solar generating plant should be reduced from $65 million to $10 million, and that the money be channelled instead into the production and testing of solar heaters.

The pilot plant was given the green light by the Ford Administration on January 6, when ERDA announced that it had selected a site in the Mojave Desert for construction of a 10 MW plant. It was expected to begin operations in 1980, followed by a second pilot plant a couple of years later and commercial-scale plants in the late 1990s.

The proposal to redirect funds from the long-term solar power plant program into efforts to commercialize solar heaters is in line with the overall policy of concen-

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would seem to eliminate OSTP as any sort of counterweight. Many years have passed since Eisenhower called for help, and perhaps the dynamics of the arms race no longer call for the counterweight that he needed. As it turned out, it wasn't much of a counterweight. But to the extent that the President is supposed to have independent scientific and technical advice, the Press appointment, tracing back to the Pentagon, at least raises an occasion for curiosity. —DSG

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. . . Solar Demonstration Program Gets a Boost

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trating on short-term programs. The reprogrammed funds would be used to underwrite the costs of producing and testing 1300 new solar heating units next year, a move which reflects the new Administration's willingness to force-feed the growth of the nascent solar industry. The Ford Administration had cut the budget for such efforts, arguing that solar heating technology is now relatively well developed, and it's up to industry to commercialize it.

The proposed changes in spending on fusion research would result in a total cut of $80 million from Ford's budget proposals. The Tokamak Fusion Test Reactor, which is under construction at Princeton University, would be allowed to go ahead, though its start-up date would slip by about 6 months, to late 1981. The cuts would be made across-the-board, and the fusion effort is now under review within ERDA.

The chief winner in Carter's energy proposals is research and development directed toward energy-saving technologies. Carter has recommended that Ford's budget for conservation be doubled, to reach $318 million next year. The additions would be channelled into a variety of programs, including the development of electrically powered vehicles. Last year, Ford vetoed a bill to help commercialize electric propulsion systems, and when Congress overrode the veto, he moved very slowly to implement the legislation (SGR Vol. VI, No. 16).

As for other research agencies, Ford's budget proposals for the National Science Foundation (NSF) have not been altered at all, and the House Committee on Science and Technology, which received word some time ago that no changes should be anticipated, is well into its authorization hearings on NSF's budget.

The only change in the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is a proposal to add $5 million to the budget of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, as part of an expanded effort to combat childhood diseases. The Ford budget proposals for NIH next year were relatively parsimonious, providing an increase of only $40 million — less than a cost-of-living increase. The fact that Carter has not proposed any major additions reflects the expectation that Congress will add to the request in any case.

One noteworthy item is that the Carter Administration has specifically endorsed a proposal in the Ford budget to eliminate NIH's Biomedical Research Support Grants Program, a program dating back to 1960 which has provided funds for such items as animal facilities and central services which are not covered by regular research grants. A statement distributed by the Department of Health, Education and Welfare argues that the program has "accomplished its objective of building institutional strength," and suggests that "because of increasing demand for research dollars, priority must go toward focusing funds in specific biomedical areas such as cancer or heart disease." As expected, the new Administration has rejected the Ford proposal to transfer funds for NIH staff salaries and intramural research to the Assistant Secretary of Health. They will remain in NIH's budget.

As for the space program, the budget revisions would add $10 million to NASA's budget for a study of possible follow-up missions to last year's successful Mars Viking Landers. The studies will look at the possibility of launching a spacecraft in 1984, and a second spacecraft, to recover Martian soil and return it to earth, in 1988.—CN

In Print

Following are recent publications of more than routine interest:

Directory of Research Institutes in the People's Republic of China, three volumes, published by the National Council for US-China Trade, 1050 17th St. N.W., Suite 350, Washington, DC 20036. Volume I, agriculture, forestry, fisheries; Volume II, chemicals, construction, electronics; Volume III, energy, light industry, machinery, transport. The directory includes name, address, and responsibilities of institutes, staff biographies, and publications. (Price: $300 or $125 per volume; for academic and non-profit organizations, $200 for the three volumes).

Recent RANN Reports, contains data on 175 projects supported by NSF's program of Research Applied to National Needs, plus other information about RANN. (Document NSF/RA — 770014, available without charge from NSF, Research Applications Directorate, 1800 G St. N.W., Washington, DC 20550).

US Scientists and Engineers: 1974, NSF's latest report on how many of which kind, their sex, age, race, and so forth. (42 pages, $1.25; order by Stock No. 038-000-00302-0 from US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402).

Technology Assessment in Business and Government, summary and analysis of hearings held last June by the Board of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment; concludes that technology assessment techniques are increasingly employed in the public and private sectors. (32 pages, $1; order by Stock No. 052-003-00306-6 from US Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402).

Academy Endorses NSF Peer Review System

The oft-criticized peer review system, at least as it is employed by the National Science Foundation (NSF), will soon receive a resounding endorsement from a top-level committee of the National Academy of Sciences. For the past three years, the Academy's Committee on Science and Public Policy (COSPUP) has been sponsoring a major review of NSF's grant-awarding system which, according to Academy President Philip Handler, will conclude that "the system is eminently fair and shows no sign of bias."

Handler previewed the COSPUP report — which is due to be published in April — during hearings held last week by the House subcommittee on Science, Research and Development. That subsommittee, it may be recalled, conducted extensive hearings on NSF's peer review system some 18 months ago, and subsequently issued a report which gave the system essentially a clean bill of health. As a result of the subcommittee's investigation, the grumbles over peer review which had been reverberating around Congress and in the Office of Management and Budget died down.

The Academy's report is therefore not exactly a timely document, but it may at least shed some light on NSF's inner workings. It will also provide a counterweight to recent charges that the Foundation conducted slipshod reviews of a grant application for an energy policy study which was also being sponsored by the oil industry, and that reviews of the controversial MACOS curriculum project were flawed.

The study was conducted for COSPUP by Stephen Cole of the State University of New York at Stonybrook and Jonathan Cole of Columbia University. According to Handler's testimony, the study involved an examination of about 1200 decisions made by NSF in fiscal year 1975 on grant applications for projects in 10 fields of basic research. Some 250 of the decisions were examined in "the greatest possible detail," including a perusal of the comments of peer reviewers and all correspondence relating to the application. It was not a search for instances of improper behavior, Handler noted, but it was an attempt to guage the effectiveness of the operation of the entire system.

Among the questions pursued by the Coles was the oft-heard theory that eminent scientists from prestigious institutions have a distinct advantage in the peer review process over young scientists from second-rank universities. According to Handler, the study will conclude that "Scientists who have published work that is frequently cited are only slightly more apt to receive favorable ratings than are scientists with a paucity of citations to their work. At NSF, eminent investigators with established track records, located at prestigious departments, and who have been active scientists for quite a while, do not have a significantly better chance of receiving favorable ratings on their proposals than do scientists at what we will call lower levels in the social stratification system of science."

Handler described that conclusion as "very surprising," suggesting that "few of us in the National Academy of Sciences expected such an outcome to this study."

If the reviews are indeed relatively unbiased, the question then arises whether NSF officials are guided by them. The answer, according to Handler, is "considerably, but not totally." The study indicated that about 92 per cent of the proposals which scored high marks from reviewers were funded, while only about 10 per cent of those which received comparatively low ratings were funded. He did not elaborate on the reasons why some supposedly poor applications received support, but noted that "the bases for such decisions will be examined in a separate report."

Handler acknowledged in his testimony that the COSPUP study would have been a bit more useful if it had been published a couple of years ago. He said, however, that it took the best part of a year to plan the study and enter into an agreement with the Coles, and another year was lost in negotiations between the Academy and NSF over access to peer review reports which NSF had promised reviewers would be held in confidence.

Vote on Jensen Stirs AAAS

The nomination of racial theorist Arthur Jensen, the Berkeley psychologist, to be a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, ignited a dispute at the AAAS' 143 annual meeting, last week in Denver. Following a series of votes so confused that Margaret Mead, a past president of the AAAS, called them a muddle, Jensen was voted in to the essentially meaningless honor. The 71-member AAAS Council, which approves fellows upon nomination by their disciplinary section, finally waffled through the issue by passing a resolution to re-examine the criteria for picking fellows.

Roberts Quits ERDA Post

Richard W. Roberts, who has headed ERDA's nuclear energy division for the past 18 months, has resigned to take a post designated as "Staff Executive-Technology Studies" at General Electric. A former Director of the National Bureau of Standards, Roberts was a GE executive before joining the government.

Mental Health Commission Gets Free-Wheeling Mandate

Mental health professionals are learning that the First Family's expressed interest in mental health may not automatically translate into immediate and dramatic windfalls for existing mental health programs or into a dominant role for special interest groups in White House plans to take a new look at whether or not the public is receiving adequate mental health services.

It's a bit too soon to tell just what approach the new administration will take to mental health, but there is at least a hint that it may be an independent one. And, while that possibility may leave professional organizations and other groups which lay particular claim to expertise in mental health in some doubt as to what role they will play, there's little doubt that they're quite happy to live with the ambiguity for a while.

For one thing, mental health is being given unprecedented visibility and moral support at the White House level after a long period of White House neglect and outright animosity for existing programs. One notable manifestation of that support is the appointment of a longtime Carter adviser, psychiatrist Peter Bourne, as a White House special assistant with special responsibilities for mental health and substance abuse. In addition, President Carter moved quickly on a post-election promise from Rosalynn Carter, issuing an executive order last month creating a Presidential Commission on Mental Health.

Social Science Report

Full-Time Enrollments Decline

Following two years of sharp increases, full-time enrollment in graduate science and engineering courses declined slightly this academic year, according to a survey conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF). In contrast, parttime enrollment went up by about 7 per cent.

The NSF survey indicates that the life sciences and environmental sciences remain fashionable areas of study, while interest in graduate studies in engineering and physical sciences continues to decline. Graduate enrollment in engineering dropped by more than 4 per cent, enrollment in mathematical and computer sciences declined by more than 3 per cent, and enrollment in physical sciences went down by nearly 2 per cent. On the other hand, enrollment in environmental and health science courses rose by nearly 8 per cent each, and total graduate enrollment in life science courses increased by nearly 6 per cent.

The 7 per cent increase in part-time enrollment continues a trend which began in the early 1970s. Part-time students now account for about 29 per cent of total enrollment in graduate science and engineering schools.

(A summary of the survey results is available free of charge from NSF, Division of Science Resources Studies, Washington, D.C. 20550. Ask for report No. NSF-77-302).

On the other hand, the White House has asked Congress for about the same money for next year as it allowed for mental health programs this year. While Carter's budget amendments entail substantial increases over the Ford budget — especially for training programs long under attack by the Office of Management and Budget — the Ford estimates for mental health research, training and community mental health centers have been ignored by Congress for so long that they hardly count for purposes of comparison. In short, there are no "real" increases in next year's mental health budget.

In addition, while President Carter so far has not had a great deal to say about mental health, leaving the job of spokesperson and chief advocate to Mrs. Carter, what he has said demonstrates at least a casual understanding of the politics and internal conflicts of the mental health business and more than a little skepticism about the value of professional disputes and territorial battles in seeing to it that people are able to obtain whatever help they need.

In a special White House ceremony which marked the signing of the Commission's birth certificate, and which itself was marked by a little more missionary zeal than substance, Carter, flanked by his wife, noted that having the chance to improve mental health services is "one of the most gratifying experiences that a human being could have." But, he added, the issues involved in upgrading care are extremely complex and further complicated by the number of voices pleading different cases.

"I've seen as President, the complexity of dealing with the mental health field because of the diversity of interests and the complexity of responsible groups" each with its own "fervent" commitment to doing something, Carter said. He added that he wanted to see an open Commission study in which "no group is excluded from the process," and, in addition, to make sure that "we've torn down the...walls that have sometimes been built around us because [people] didn't want to have someone encroach on their special con-

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. . . Mrs. Carter Cautions On Expecting More Money

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cerns, because they were afraid they might relinquish the chance to get their share of the money... We're all in it together," he told assembled government officials and representatives of mental health related professional and volunteer groups.

The Commission, charged with making a broad review of needs for services and research in mental health, is due to complete its work early next year, with a "major" preliminary report scheduled for late summer, according to Mrs. Carter. Physician and lawyer Thomas Bryant, former president of the foundation-funded Drug Abuse Council, Inc., in Washington, D.C., was named executive director of the panel, and it was expected that other members of the twenty-person group, to be named in the next few weeks, will include citizen volunteers as well as experts.

Mrs. Carter also described the forthcoming enterprise, in which she said she will serve as "a very active honorary chairperson," in relatively populist terms. She indicated that the group will spend a good part of its time on the road in public hearings in order to get closer to citizens' perceptions of mental health needs. While the Commission will look at various methods of financing mental health care, Mrs. Carter said that that does not necessarily mean "that large sums of money will be added" to the federal budget or that there will be a call for new programs. She noted that it doesn't always take more money to do a better job.

While there are some doubts that the Commission can get off the ground in its short lifespan, let alone tour the country and issue a substantive report that updates the nation's mental health care needs, there have been no loud complaints as yet. Officials of the National Institute of Mental Health, as well as professional groups, have mostly applauded the effort, whatever the course, outcome or perceived shortcomings.

Despite the lack of more money for mental health programs, the Carter administration nevertheless has had a decided effect on the federal government's mental health agencies, the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration and its subordinate institutes. Although it looks as though the "depoliticization" of the National Institutes of Health may not hold true for ADAMHA — administrator James Isbister was caught up in the mass removal of top health officials — the agency has already managed to rid itself of some of the vestiges of past Republican administrations.

A major example of bouncing back from past policies is NIMH Director Bert Brown's recent rejection of a planned change in mental health training programs. As a result of repeated OMB efforts to phase out federal support for training mental health specialists — psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and psychiatric nurses — the agency last summer indicated that it would resign itself to the phaseout and, instead, focus on other training efforts,including an experiment in providing mental health training for physicians.

Brown has stated that there will be some changes made — mainly to insure that those trained with public funds wind up in public service — but that the NIMH will continue training mental health professionals even if future training funds have more strings attached.

Perhaps the most dramatic effect so far has been its beneficial effect on morale at ADAMHA and NIMH in particular, which for some years has harbored some of the most depressed personnel around town. Tossed back and forth between administration attempts to do away with most programs and Congressional efforts to restore attempted cuts, agency personnel have had little opportunity to plot new directions for programs, implement desired changes in old policies or even breathe easy with the status quo.

As Brown noted, referring to NIMH's training programs, there has been "unprecedented turbulence" in the agency over the past six to eight years." He added that "the presidential transition has provided us a moment of respite in the midst of the melee," and, right now, ADAMHA and professional groups seem to be concentrating on enjoying the moment. —PM

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Administration to Seek Wide DNA Guidelines

Federal legislation to control recombinant DNA research throughout the United States is expected to be proposed by the Carter Administration in the next few weeks. Donald Fredrickson, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), told a group of prominent scientists and university administrators on February 19 that lawyers from a number of government agencies have determined that no existing law can be used to regulate all recombinant DNA research, and he said that new legislation will probably be drafted by an inter-agency task force which has been looking into the matter for the past four months.

At present, the only formal controls on recombinant DNA experiments are guidelines published last June by NIH (SGR Vol. VI, No. 12). The guidelines apply only to research directly supported by the Federal government, however, and they are not backed by any monitoring or enforcement mechanism. Furthermore, there are no existing regulations governing research supported by industry or by other non-government bodies.

The lack of enforcement, and the fact that industry isn't bound by the NIH guidelines, have prompted several state and local governments to consider adopting their own regulations to control recombinant DNA research (SGR Vol. VII, No. 3), and it is the prospect of widely differing local controls that is pushing the federal government into supporting legislation.

If federal legislation is enacted, it would help reduce some of the local concern about unregulated research, and it may take the steam out of moves to develop separate local regulations. There is also the possibility that federal legislation could specifically pre-empt local moves. (It should be noted, for example, that federal regulations governing discharge of radioactivity by nuclear power plants cannot be modified by state governments). But any attempt to restrict local actions is likely to be opposed by Senator Edward Kennedy, to whose subcommittee such legislation would be referred, since Kennedy is a staunch supporter of citizens' participation in the formulation of research policy.

The meeting at which Fredrickson floated the idea of federal legislation was a curious affair. Called to bring scientists and university administrators up to date with recent developments in regulating recombinant DNA research, it consisted of a review of local moves around the United States and of regulations adopted by other countries, followed by a discourse by federal lawyers on the reasons why present federal laws are inapplicable. The group then discussed in detail a bill recently introduced into Congress by Senator Dale Bumpers (D-Ark), and the meeting closed with Fredrickson noting that the inter-agency task force hasn't yet reached any decisions on what form, if any, legislation should take.

The immediate question is why the meeting was called. The most obvious answer is that it was designed to prepare the scientific community for the inevitability of federal legislation — a prospect which scientists have resisted from the start.

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